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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6463
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 7628
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5789
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1099
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5172
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0593
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0562
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0689
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0038
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0647
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000403

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR L, NEA/ELA, AND DS/OFM
PARIS FOR WALLER, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OFDP](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: SARG CONTINUES EFFORT TO MONITOR DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL
IN SYRIA

Classified By: CDA Maura Connelly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Once a year the SARG Protocol Department sends diplomatic missions a circular requesting all missions provide the MFA with advance notification of any travel by official personnel outside of Damascus. In previous years, the MFA requested advance notification of travel by diplomats to specific border regions. This year, the circular suggested accredited missions are photographing military sites and warned against consorting with individuals and groups who "might influence or provoke" illegal activity. The circular's language cautions diplomats against speaking to "Syrian citizens" without prior approval from the MFA and contains veiled threats against those missions that fail to comply with the guidance.

¶2. (C) Comment: The SARG MFA appears to come under periodic pressure from the Syrian intelligence organizations, which evidently find following diplomats tedious and annoying work. Faced with these internal complaints, the MFA seems more concerned with curbing the diplomatic activities that annoy the intelligence organizations than it is with demonstrating the SARG's understanding of and respect for the Vienna Conventions. We would like the Department's view of the validity under the Vienna Conventions of the MFA's most recent directive.

¶3. (SBU) Post's translation of the text of the Protocol Department's circular follows.

*****Begin Text*****

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Protocol Department

Circular

Compliments....

The Ministry recently noticed that some accredited missions are holding activities that violate stated diplomatic goals, including visiting other Syrian cities without prior approval of the Ministry, photographing strategic and military areas,

transporting suspicious people in Embassy cars, taking side roads instead of main ones (which might be dangerous), discussing topics with Syrian groups and individuals that might influence or provoke activities that violate Syrian laws and regulations, and arriving at restricted border crossing areas and crossing Syrian borders without prior MFA authorization.

Accordingly, the Ministry calls your attention to previous related circulars and makes the following requests of all diplomatic missions:

1. Obtain previous approval from the Ministry - Protocol Department before granting any interviews or activities with Syrian citizens so the Ministry can facilitate required visits and meeting procedures.

2. Inform the Ministry before departing Damascus to visit other Syrian cities at least one week ahead of the date of the visit. This is to ensure security and safety of the accredited diplomats.

The Ministry respectfully requests all diplomatic missions implement the above requests and hopes that it will not have to take necessary actions or procedures for those diplomatic missions who do not adhere to the aforementioned requests.

Salutations...

To all diplomatic missions and consulates accredited in Syria.

*****End Text*****
CONNELLY